



NEWS RELEASE

Department of Human Services
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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New Requirements in Effect for Child Care Transportation

NASHVILLE - New transportation requirements for child care providers are designed to help ensure Tennessee's children are as safe as possible when being driven to and from child care, said Department of Human Services Commissioner Natasha K. Metcalf.

The new rules affect child care providers licensed by DHS, including group child care homes, family child care homes, and child care centers. The rules follow recommendations made by a panel appointed by Gov. Don Sundquist earlier this year. The panel was appointed shortly after a child care van crash in April that resulted in the deaths of four children and the van driver.

Public hearings on the new requirements have been scheduled across the state (see schedule below) in order to garner public comment. However, because the safety of children is such a critical issue, emergency rules took effect in August and will remain in place until the final rules are enacted.

"We realize there are going to be additional costs associated with meeting the new requirements," said Metcalf. "But we can't put a price tag on the safety of the thousands of children in Tennessee who are being driven to and from child care settings every day."

The new rules require more stringent qualifications and additional training for child care vehicle drivers and call for improved structural soundness of vehicles used to transport children and regular maintenance coupled with daily inspections of vehicles. In addition, the rules require a means of identifying and reporting vehicles being improperly driven while transporting children, sets up more detailed guidelines for the use of child restraint devices, and requires additional supervision of children while they are being transported.

A copy of the emergency rules can be found on the internet at
<http://www.state.tn.us/humanserv/whatsnew.htm#emergency>

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A summary of the major changes that took effect immediately include:

- Additional training requirements are set for transportation staff;
- Additional procedures are established for inspecting and maintaining child care vehicles;
- Special requirements are set for the use of 15-passenger vans;
- Special requirements are set for the proper use of Child Safety Restraint Systems;
- An adult monitor on the vehicle is required when transporting four or more pre-school children;
- The time limit on transportation one-way has been lowered from 60 45 minutes.

Changes to be phased in include:

- BEGINNING OCT. 1, 2002, MOST CHILD CARE VEHICLES WILL BE REQUIRED TO DISPLAY THE CHILD CARE AGENCY'S NAME, PHONE NUMBER, AND THE COMPLAINT HOTLINE NUMBER ON THE VEHICLE;
- Beginning Jan. 1, 2003, most drivers will be required to hold a Commercial Driver's License;
- Beginning Jan. 1, 2003, drivers will be required to obtain annually a health statement verifying they are physically and mentally capable of transporting children in a group setting;
- Beginning Jan. 1, 2005, vehicles that are designed to carry more than 10 passengers will be required to meet Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards that apply to school buses.

Hearings to give the public an opportunity to comment on the rules before they are finalized have been scheduled in Memphis, Knoxville and Nashville. Dates and locations are:

Memphis – September 16, 2002, 6:30 p.m. (CDT), State Office building, 170 North Main Street, Second Floor Auditorium.

Knoxville – September 17, 2002, 6:30 p.m. (EDT), 531 Henley Street, Seventh Floor Conference Room A.

Nashville – September 18, 2002, 6:30 p.m. (CDT), Citizens Plaza Building, 400 Deaderick Street, Second Floor Conference Room.

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